

**PRELIMINARY**  
**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**

Baker Creek Density Management and Wildlife Habitat Enhancement  
Project

**Environmental Assessment (EA) Number OR-086-03-02**

June 3, 2003

**INTRODUCTION**

The BLM (Bureau of Land Management) has conducted an environmental analysis (EA Number OR-086-03-02) for a proposal to perform a density management thinning on approximately 647 acres of 35-65 year old, relatively dense Douglas-fir stands. New temporary roads, and reconstructed roads that would be built to support the thinning as well as additional roads and skid trails would be decommissioned at the completion of the project, for a net decrease of 1.6 miles of roads within the project area. In addition, 298 acres of wildlife habitat enhancement would occur in stands that would not be treated with density management. The BLM will pursue legal access to implement these projects. These projects would occur in T3S, R6W sections 13, 23, 24, 25, 35, 36; and T3S R5W sections 17, 19, 29, 31, 33; and T4S R6W sections 1, 2; and T4S R5W section 7 Willamette Meridian..

Implementation of the alternative 1 would conform to management actions and direction contained in the ROD/RMP (*Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan*), dated May 1995, which is tiered to and incorporates the analysis contained in the RMP/FEIS (*Salem District Proposed Resource Management Plan /Final Environmental Impact Statement*), dated September 1994. The ROD/RMP provides a comprehensive ecosystem management strategy in conformance with the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (February 1994) and the *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (April 1994). This project is also in compliance with the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (January, 2001).

The EA is attached to and incorporated by reference in this preliminary FONSI determination. The EA and preliminary FONSI will be made available for public review from June 11, 2003 to July 11, 2003.

The notice for public comment will be published in a legal notice by local newspapers of general circulation (*The McMinnville NewsRegister* and *Headlight Herald*); sent to those individuals, organizations, and agencies that have requested to be involved in the

environmental planning and decision making processes; and posted on the Internet at <http://www.or.blm.gov/salem/html/planning/index.htm>. Comments received in the Tillamook Field Office, 4610 Third Street, Tillamook, Oregon 97141, **on or before July 11, 2003 at 4:00 PM, Pacific Daylight Saving Time**, will be considered in making the final decisions for these projects. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 7:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., closed on holidays.

Based upon the EA and supporting documents, the Field Manager of the Tillamook Resource Area, made a preliminary determination that Alternative 1, hereafter referred to as the "proposed action", is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This finding is based on the following discussion:

**Context.** The proposed action is a site-specific action directly involving 945 acres of BLM administered land, that by itself does not have international, national, region-wide, or state-wide importance. The project area does not contain designated 'critical habitat' for the marbled murrelet, or northern spotted owl. The project area does contain 'suitable' and 'dispersal' habitat for the northern spotted owl, and 'suitable habitat' for the marbled murrelet. This project contains six acres in the Nestucca key watershed. The project is in the municipal watershed for the communities of Carlton and McMinnville. The project area falls within the Evolutionarily Significant Unit (a distinct population segment) of upper Willamette steelhead and upper Willamette chinook which are Federally threatened species. The project also contains 'Essential fish habitat' for the Upper Willamette Chinook Salmon and Coho Salmon. The project area contains 6 acres for the Oregon Coast Coho Salmon, a Federally threatened species. The north half of the project area is in a designated Reserve Pair Area for the Northern Spotted Owl. The discussion of the significance criteria that follows applies to the intended action and is within the context of local importance. Chapter 4 of the EA details the effects of the proposed action. None of the effects identified, including direct, indirect and cumulative effects, are considered to be significant and do not exceed those effects described in the RMP/FEIS.

**Intensity.** The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27.

**1. Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.** Due to the proposed action's design features, the predicted effects, most noteworthy, include: 1/ acceleration of the development of some late-successional forest structural features on about 647 acres using density management and an additional 298 acres of wildlife habitat enhancement projects. These activities include the development of large trees, gaps in the canopy, snags and down wood, various levels of over story tree densities; 2/ enhancement of the overall level of diversity in the area; 3/ social and economic benefits to the local communities through the supply of approximately 8.41 million board feet of timber to local mills and some contract work associated with the road decommissioning project and the wildlife habitat enhancement project; 4/ restoration and maintenance of the ACS (Aquatic Conservation Strategy) objectives; 5/ soil disturbance and compaction, and loss in soil productivity on about 5 acres or .02 percent of the project area; and 6/ no loss in

population viability of special status or special attention species (also see significance criteria #9 below); 7/ slight increases in sediment are anticipated from road construction, road improvement and culvert removal, and timber harvest activities. These effects would not exceed those analyzed in the RMP; 8/ no impacts to water temperature, streamflows or stream channel stability.

None of the environmental effects disclosed above and discussed in detail in Chapter 4 of the EA and associated appendices are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the RMP/FEIS.

**2. The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.**

Public health and safety were not identified as an issue. The proposed action is comparable to other wildlife habitat enhancement and density management projects which have occurred within the Salem District with no unusual health or safety concerns.

**3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** There are no historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wild and scenic rivers, or wildernesses located within the project area (EA, Appendix 3).

The project area is located within the Adaptive Management Area and Riparian Reserve land use allocations, as identified in the RMP. Activities associated with the proposed action are predicted to accelerate the development of some late-successional forest structural features, and will contribute to the attainment of ACS objectives.

**4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** Extensive scoping of the proposed action resulted in only three project specific comment letters. The disposition of public comments is contained in Appendix 1 of the EA.

The effects of the proposed action on the quality of the human environment were adequately understood by the interdisciplinary team to provide an environmental analysis. A complete disclosure of the predicted effects of the proposed action is contained in Chapter 4 of the EA and associated appendices.

**5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The proposed action is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas and have found effects to be reasonably predictable. The environmental effects to the human environment are fully analyzed in the EA. There are no predicted effects on the human environment which are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

**6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The proposed action does not set a precedent for future actions that may have significant effects, nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. The proposed action decommissions 1.6 miles of road no longer needed by the BLM and accelerates the development of some late-successional forest habitat characteristics on 945 acres of land managed by the BLM. Any future projects will be evaluated through

the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process and will stand on their own as to environmental effects.

**7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** The interdisciplinary team evaluated the proposed action in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete disclosure of the effects of the selected alternative is contained in Chapter 4 of the EA.

**8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The proposed action will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will the proposed action cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources (EA, Appendix 3).

**9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.**

- In accordance with regulations pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, formal consultation with the USFWS concerning the potential impacts of the Baker Creek Density Management and Wildlife Habitat Enhancement project upon the spotted owl, marbled murrelet and bald eagle has been completed. This was accomplished by including the Baker Creek Density Management and Wildlife Habitat Enhancement project within the annual programmatic “habitat modification” biological assessment prepared by the interagency Level 1 Team (terrestrial subgroup) for the North Coast Province, rather than the preparation of a project site-specific Biological Assessment. The proposed action alternative is consistent with definitions for *light to moderate thinning* as found in the programmatic BA. Those portions of the Wildlife Habitat Enhancement project which involve CWD creation were included within the programmatic “habitat modification” biological assessment prepared by the interagency Level 1 Team (terrestrial subgroup) for FY 2003-2004 projects within the North Coast Province which may modify the habitat of bald eagles, northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets (*USFWS Biological Opinion reference 1-7-02-F-958*).
- Section 7 Consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) will be initiated as the proposed project action has been determined to be a “May Affect” to Upper Willamette Steelhead. The proposed project has been determined to have no adverse impact to essential fish habitat as described in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (2000), for any population of Chinook or Coho salmon. Informal

consultation with NOAA Fisheries, NMFS is anticipated to be initiated project specifically in 2003.

**10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The proposed action does not violate any known Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. The EA and supporting Project Record contain discussions pertaining to the Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Coastal Zone Management Act, Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice), and Executive Order 13212 (Adverse Energy Impact). State, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. Furthermore, the proposed action alternative is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.